

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 000527

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR PM/RSAT, PM/PMAT, NEA, AND NEA/ARP  
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JOINT STAFF FOR J-5 INMA COALITION AFFAIRS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/11/2029

TAGS: PREL IZ KPAO BA

SUBJECT: GOB TONE ON IRAQ CAREFUL IN PUBLIC AMIDST STREET  
DISCONTENT ON FIGHTING

REF: A. MANAMA 486

1B. MANAMA 476

Classified By: By Charge d'Affaires Robert S. Ford for  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) On April 9 a GOB official statement expressed concern about the violence in Iraq and urged all parties to exercise self-restraint. The statement also said that Bahrain hopes to see the reconstruction of Iraq and the restoration of stability. Privately, top GOB officials have told the Charge (ref a and b) of their understanding and strong support for Coalition forces to contain Muqtada Al-Sadr and the Jaysh Al-Mahdi.

12. (U) Even though the GOB has publicly measured its words, many Bahraini parliamentary and civil society leaders have been very vocal about the escalating violence in Iraq. Press coverage of the April 9 Shi'a Friday sermons called for the US occupiers to stop the violence and get out of Iraq now. Coverage of the Sunni Friday sermons echoed the need for the US to leave and also pointed out that the violence has unified Sunni and Shi'a Iraqis in the face of the American enemy. Local Arabic and English columnists compared events in Fallujah to the Jenin massacre of Palestine. Editorialist Abdulla Al-Ayoobi asserted that the US has learned the Zionist lessons of crime and cruelty to the people of the region. What is happening in Iraq today is a duplicate image of what happens in Palestine everyday, he added. Sunni political society Al Minbar Islamiya issued a press statement condemning what they consider "criminal incidents" that the American forces have committed against the Iraqis.

13. (C) Our private conversations with our Shi'a contacts are no more supportive. Condemning the recent violence in Fallujah and Najaf, some Embassy contacts label it as "US generated." A reliable source told PolOff on April 10 that main Shi'a opposition leader Al-Wifaq President Shaikh Ali Salman does not agree with Al-Sadr's tactics, but credits Al-Sadr for successfully uniting Iraq's Shi'a and the Sunni against the United States. This makes the situation far more dangerous for the Americans, Salman told our source. Salman pointed out that in Fallujah Iraqi Shi'a are now giving blood for the wounded Sunnis. Bahrain Women's Society President Wajeeha Al Baharna told PolOff on April 10 that Al-Sadr's taking of international hostages "crosses the line into terrorism." She warned that since the US is unsuccessful in combating terrorism, that America needs to get out now or be responsible for the total loss of the country. With the resignation of Iraqi Governing Council members, Council of Representatives Mohammed Shaikh Al-Abass told PolOff on April 10 that the Americans should leave Iraq now or stay and pick one Iraqi leader. Shura Council member Mohammed Hassan Radhi offered PolOff his solution on April 11: the Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani is the only leader that can quell the violence and be able to back Muqtada Al-Sadr into a corner.

14. (SBU) COMMENT. Last week Post reported that the capture of Muqtada Al-Sadr was unlikely to impact Bahraini Shi'a. This week Bahraini Shi'a have started to voice their unhappiness with the US after watching the week-long coverage of the escalating violence in Iraq and its use of 'massive firepower' (to quote a parliamentarian) to hunt Al-Sadr. It is unclear whether continued US military actions in Iraq will unify Bahraini Shi'a and Sunni against the US. Though there has not been much change of opinion among our Sunni contacts, two separate contacts told PolOff (on two individual occasions) that if they had to pick between the US and Muqtada Al-Sadr, they would pick Al-Sadr. END COMMENT.

15. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

FORD